

City Council Special Called Budget Work Session Meeting Transcript – 8/22/2016

Title: ATXN 24/7 Recording

Channel: 6 - ATXN

Recorded On: 8/22/2016 6:00:00 AM

Original Air Date: 8/22/2016

Transcript Generated by SnapStream

=====

[11:03:05 AM]

>> Mayor Adler: Council, while we're here, we have been set for a budget work session. She just adjourned. So I'm going to convene it and a discussion about whether or not you all want to do this or not. Again, what we have been asked by staff to do was to take a look at the list and see if there were things on here that could come out. As you recall, last year we also periodically over several weeks went through the budget to talk about items and to give a chance for councilmembers to talk about concepts with their colleagues and those conversations I think over time probably helped us get to where it was we wanted to go. What will you see here was just handed out was what I described and posted last week, I've highlighted some things in yellow that I think may not have -- there may be seven votes to not continue. This is as posted on the bulletin board. I think we may be losing councilmembers on the dais so we may not be able to actually take -- have action here today regardless, but certainly we had agreed that we would tee up time for the council to be able to do this if there was interest and we have this set every day. So if we don't do this today, there's also time available tomorrow and thereafter. Councilmember kitchen. >> Kitchen: I would also like to point out today is our deadline for concept menu items and I personally would feel better talking about this after I see them all. >> Mayor Adler: I'm not sure we could do much pruning today. It takes seven votes and we don't have that kind of critical mass on the dais. With that said, mayor pro tem. >> Tovo: I just wanted to speak to today's deadline

[11:05:06 AM]

which I'm a little concerned about. One thing I wanted to say is that my office and I are working on identifying some potential savings in the budget to free up some money for some of the things that we've all added that would be costs, and I don't know that those will be ready and have four sponsors by the end of the day, though I'm going to work on it. I would just say I hope -- I think we all are of the understanding that budget changes can happen at any point and so I would say especially with regard to things that would save us money, I hope we can all be open to consideration especially after today. I would say that, you know, it's especially challenging since we haven't talked about any of the concept budget items or the action we take on these will in some cases necessitate other action so I appreciate the deadline and am going to work toward it because we're going to -- but we're going to have to be somewhat flexible. A heads up. I know some of the changes I'm bringing forward that would be cost

savings are, you know, could potentially be -- on not -- I mean I think we all -- they are going to be to items that we would all support were funds abundant, or most of us would support if funds were abundant. But I think up against some of the things we want to fund, it makes it a more palatable discussion. I guess all that is to say -- that's my point. >> Mayor Adler: So what we had agreed to nothing we're doing in these when we move things on or off or any of the deadlines prevented anybody from being able to offer something. We don't have a convention established for a post today addition, but certainly we could figure that out as a council. Councilmember kitchen, did you

[11:07:07 AM]

raise your hand? Councilmember Garza. >> Kitchen: I was just going to concur with what mayor pro tem said. >> Mayor Adler: Councilmember Garza. >> Garza: Only because we're all here and this -- this issue did come up during the budget hearings, one of my concepts is -- it's on page 13 of 25. We're going to be -- and my co-sponsors there were with the mayor, councilmember pool, councilmember Casar. And since we're all here, it would be easier this way instead of staff going back and forth. I wanted to amend that to say it does not also include any front-line operations such as closing stations or closing -- shutting down units or anything like that. So I was wondering if I could get that agreement from the sponsors that are here. >> Casar: Yes. >> Mayor Adler: Yes. >> Garza: Okay. And councilmember pool? Is up there, but I also wanted to emphasize that this says not exceeding 1%. It doesn't say it has to be 1%, it says not exceeding. So what my intent was looking for, 1% would be great, but, you know, anywhere that there can be savings found in the entire public safety, not just -- not just police is what I was looking for. And then I had a followup question to that. So how is this going to -- it's on the concept list. How does this get moved to the next stage where the departments go back and start looking for those savings? Or start looking for, you know, whatever they can, whatever they can trim to bring back to us. Because, you know, this is different from a no, you can't have those ftes and that's it and we can adjust the numbers and we know how much

[11:09:07 AM]

money we had left. Just wondering how that process is going to work. >> Mayor Adler: I'm not sure -- this item said in consultation with the association so I don't know if -- if you are having them come back with what their suggestions are for budget, how they would -- what they would trim if they were to trim budgets. And I don't know if at this point those in response, we could ask Ed if this appearing on the concept menu has asked those departments outside of the association's work to identify where they would cut if they were cutting. Up to 1%, nonfront line, nonemployee. >> I know our public safety departments have been looking into the initial understanding which was trying to find 1% reduction in their budget without the changes that were just discussed. My understanding of the process council set in motion was that these concepts were just concepts until such time that the council voted to move them forward. Some of these concepts require a significant amount of staff time to analyze and so I think the process you put in place it required four votes to formally move these items forward so staff would then conduct the necessary work or analysis to the extent an item required work or analysis. I think seven votes to remove an item. >> Mayor Adler: Right. This one had four votes on it. And you are saying the staff is taking a look at these things now? >> We were taking a look at these things as we felt it was prudent if council hadn't been taking action on the menu. I don't know what the difference is between four co-sponsors and -- sometimes people have added themselves as sponsors to the items after

[11:11:08 AM]

the fact, but my understanding of the process was the a public setting council would vote to move an item forward or not understanding that sponsorship could change. >> Mayor Adler: I think the understanding for me was a little different from that. There would be things you would be taking a look at you would do. If there was something on here that took a significant period of time that you were concerned about doing because it would take a long time and wanted to vote on it, you would express that. Some of the things I've highlighted in yellow which is why I want staff to give an indication whether or not those are things that are worth spending the time on or not. So I would say probably something that was identified like this item that had four people that have indicated intention to do it that you would be looking at that absent coming back and saying this one takes lot of time, can you please see if the seriousness exists to do that. I think that would be helpful. >> And again, we have been item, you know, although that wasn't my understanding of the process, but there's clearly four people that sponsored it. On that item there is a significantment of work particularly when we're looking at \$6.8 million in reductions in the safety department and engaging the bargaining units in discussions, that's not something done in an afternoon. >> Garza: That's why I wanted to emphasize, it says up to. That's why I was concerned. I don't want -- it sounds, you know, we can't find [inaudible] And I understand that and especially after the matrix report and discussion with APD where we need extra people because of this report that we did, I understand that it's not going to be possible to find that. If it's necessary to change my 1% to .5% or give some better direction, but this was an effort to just get to say we don't want any more than 1%,

[11:13:08 AM]

but anything you can get close to 1%. So maybe that means ems comes back with -- and I hope they don't, but, you know, all we can give you is \$10,000. That's it. Because I have had discussions -- and I know that some of the associations have met with fire, police and ems, and what I heard was there would be -- what would be offered was we have nothing else, we're going to have to close a fire station. Which we know is not going to happen. We're not going to close front-line operations. So I just -- my frustration with, you know, we don't do zero based budgeting for the city of Austin so all council sees is what is being added so we don't see every single line. We don't know and so it's very hard as councilmembers to know where to look in the budget to see if there's anything. And, of course, no department is going to want to volunteer anything and I understand that. If I was head of a department, I wouldn't want to volunteer anything. But because of all the needs that we have, this is just an effort to basically help us find something. It doesn't have to be 6.8. Maybe at the end of the day it's 500,000 total, it's just bring back something. And the frustration that I am feeling is I don't know where to look in the budget because I don't have all the budget in front of me. I guess that's the direction I want going forward is it's not go find 6.8, it's find something, please. >> Zimmerman: Mayor? >> Mayor Adler: Are you still on this topic? >> Zimmerman: Yes. A perfect segue from councilmember Garza, if you can put on the overhead the council concept menu and ways we can find savings and money, for the second year in a row I'm proposing to council to end corporate welfare. And it looks like already my recommendations are being targeted for elimination. >> Mayor Adler: Let's get

[11:15:09 AM]

right back to there in just one second. So that we resolve the item that has been raised on page 12. Mayor pro tem. >> Tovo: So I think -- I mean this is prompted by that discussion. I don't know if it's directly in response. But I would suggest that if we can carve out maybe the first part of the day on Wednesday or some part of the day on Wednesday to actually review all the concepts, I think that

would be helpful because I understand the confusion of not moving forward because we said we were going to affirmatively vote to keep on or off and whatnot, so I appreciate staff has taken a stab at some of these, but I understand from the process we set up why they haven't regarded it as direction because we said we were going to vote. Could we allocate time on Wednesday to actually discuss all of our concepts -- and I would be happy to do some of that today. >> Mayor Adler: What we've done is -- >> Tovo: I don't know if that would be useful without the rest of our colleagues. >> Mayor Adler: And we put it on the agenda each time so the opportunity has been carved out every day. It's more just the will of the council saying let's really go ahead and do that. We could do that tomorrow. We could do that Wednesday, we could do that Thursday. >> Tovo: I guess the issue is typically it falls at the end and we've been -- we lose councilmembers by the end and so -- I appreciate it's been set up every day, it's meant we rarely take time to talk about it. >> Mayor Adler: My preference would be to do that and if the will of the council is to call this earlier on Wednesday, I'll do that at our work session. A budget work session on Wednesday. I'll call this earlier. Maybe we'll hit it before we hit one of the briefings. Mr. Zimmerman. >> Zimmerman: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Again, going back to what we accomplished today, I think it's the will of this council to -- if you could put my

[11:17:10 AM]

items up, echo delta 2.01 and 3. To be fair to staff -- sorry, it's on page 3 of 25. Page 3. That's an older copy that I put on the overhead, but it's the same material. Look at the top of the page. Echo delta 2.01, 2.02 and 2.03. This is the second year I've proposed ending this corporate welfare because some companies shouldn't be allowed to be here at the expense of others. So I think there's easily seven votes here to strike this and lets get it done. And lets have this council vote and is a we like corporate welfare. Or else not. Or else ask the staff to move forward with it and let's look at this as a place of savings to the budget. I would like us to vote one way or the other. I don't think we should put it off. >> Mayor Adler: If you had only proposed to cut corporate welfare, I would have voted yes. But that's not what you proposed. What you proposed was take away our ability to be able to promote training and availability for middle income jobs and since that what is you are proposing, I'm fine to vote against that. But I don't think that the votes are here and I think the discussion was that we would pull it to Wednesday and I'm fine with making sure that we get that caught up earlier on Wednesday. >> Zimmerman: Okay. Thanks. >> Mayor Adler: Anyone else? Then I'm going to adjourn the work session on the budget. [Adjourned].